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Walter H. Baker & Company

No. 5 Hamilton Place, Boston, Massachusetts

Too Clever by Half

A Comedy in Three Acts

By
C. A. PELLANUS
Author of "A New Start," "The First Day of the Holidays," etc.

BOSTON
WALTER H. BAKER & CO.
1914

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Too Clever by Half

CHARACTERS

JUDGE SIMEON ADAMS, *a well-to-do, kindly, pompous old bachelor. Justice of the peace.*

MISS BURGESS, *his housekeeper. Self-important. With aspiring matrimonial schemes.*

NATHAN DEAN, *the village constable. Born in England. Fat-witted, and gullible.*

HOWARD FOSTER, *a Pinkerton detective. Too clever by half.*

MONSIEUR GASPARD, *a Chef d'Orchestre.*

B. FLAT, A. SHARP } *musicians. Britishers.*

MRS. WORDY, *landlady of the village inn.*

ACT I. The Judge's study, at Penrose Centre, Mass.
ACT II. The Garden-House, at Penrose Centre, Mass.
ACT III. The Judge's study, at Penrose Centre, Mass.

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no1

PREFACE

THIS comedy was written for schoolboys between the ages of twelve and fifteen, who learned and acted it with ease and enjoyment. It will be seen that some of the parts are not unsuitable for girls, and that the play could adapt itself to persons older than those for whom it was composed.

The performance requires nothing that lies beyond the ordinary resources of a house, and the changes needed for Scene II can be made by the removal of table-cloths and books, and the introduction of a few garden tools ; for the last scene it is only necessary to restore the arrangements of the first.

The dresses will be found to call for nothing more than a little ingenuity ; that of the policeman may be furnished by braiding the sleeve of an overcoat, which is worn with a leather belt. A toy soldier-helmet, blackened, will complete the outfit.

Too Clever by Half

ACT I

SCENE.—JUDGE SIMEON ADAMS' *study.*

(JUDGE *is discovered seated at a writing-table. After a short interval a bell is heard.*)

JUDGE. Ah! I suppose that means lunch. When I want to be a little late, Miss Burgess is always inconveniently punctual. (*Continues writing. Bell rings again.*) Miss Burgess is a little impatient this morning. (*Writes.*)

(*Bell rings again.*)

Enter MISS BURGESS.

MISS B. Are you ever coming to your lunch, Judge? How can I possibly make you comfortable when you are so careless of yourself? Some housekeepers would be angry, Judge, they would, indeed.

JUDGE. My dear Miss Burgess—a thousand pardons; but the business of my office is large, and must be attended to.

MISS B. Therefore, his lunch is small, and may be neglected. Come, Judge, have a little care for yourself; let the business wait until after lunch.

JUDGE. I cannot thank you enough for your consideration. This morning, however, I am particularly busy. I must hear what Nathan has to report, and I have an appointment with —— Oh, yes! by the way, Miss Burgess, I have decided to give a picnic to the neighbors. I am an old bachelor, but there is no reason why I—should—be ——

MISS B. There is none whatever, Judge.

JUDGE. I beg your pardon—I was about to say, there is no reason why I should be inhospitable on that account.

MISS B. You are far too kind, Judge; your neighbors get far better treatment than they deserve.

JUDGE. Oh, no, no, no! They are good people, and I am

always glad to see them. May I rely upon you to make proper provision for this entertainment? I have ordered a band, and expect the leader here to-day to receive instructions. Let us spare no expense, Miss Burgess. I wish the picnic to be successful. Now, pray excuse me. I will come to lunch when I have done, and be content with what I can get. I may rely upon you?

MISS B. Anything you may choose to ask me, Judge, shall receive the answer, Yes! [*Exit.*

JUDGE. A good creature, though she has been with me long enough; I should be glad to see her happily married to some worthy fellow. And now for these letters. (*Opens letters. Some topical letters may be read here.*) And what have we here; a twenty dollar bill? "Honored Sir:—I humbly beg your Honor's pardon, but the bank note your Honor paid for the corn is bad which they won't take it at the Bank and hoping to get it exchanged for a good un, I am your humble servant, J. Bilger." (*Examines bill.*) Upon my word, the man is right. Now, where did I get that bill? This must be seen to. (*Lays bill on the table.*) What else have we? (*Opens more letters.*) Bills. Bargains—the usual rubbish. (*Knock. Enter* NATHAN DEAN.) Well, Nathan! and what have you to report?

NAT. Oh! it's been a hawful week, your washup. I'm nearly wore out.

JUDGE. Indeed, I thought the village seemed quiet.

NAT. Ah, yes, but who kep' it quiet? Why, Nathan Dean. Them Boston police 'olds theirselves very 'igh, and gets a power o' notice took on 'em, but they ain't got not 'alf what I got in the way o' duty. If I 'adn't 'ad the constitooshion of a hox, your washup, this week would 'a' clean wore me to a skelinton.

JUDGE. But what has happened this week, Nathan?

NAT. Oh, it's that little Tuppins, your washup. He's a himp, he is. Whenever he see me, he hollers out "Bobby, Bobby," just because I am a Henglishman. I says to him, "If you don't mind," I says, "I'll lock yer hup," I says. And then hup comes his mother and says she'll show me whether I'll lock him hup. And she would, too, as soon as look. Oh, she's a hawful woman. And little Tuppins, the himp, goes on a-callin' after me till I really am well-nigh wore out, and him only just gone into trousers. We shall have to get the sojers to him, he's that owdacious.

JUDGE. I'll speak to him myself. The law must be respected.

NAT. Just what I told him, your washup. "Lor!" he says, as bold as brass. "You ain't the lor," he says. "Mother-in-lor more like," he says. He's a himp, he is.

JUDGE. I'll speak to him. Anything else occurred?

NAT. Nothink else, your washup. Leastways, nothink else important.

JUDGE. Very well. By the way, Nathan, look here. Some one has passed me this counterfeit bill. (*Gives him bill.* NAT. *examines it.*) Compare it with this. (*Takes out and gives him a good bill.*) You see it is a bad bill, although a good imitation. Do you think you can find out anything about it?

NAT. I could if I tried, but I'm not a-goin' to try. (*Puts down the bad bill.*) This bill 'ad better mind what it's a-doin'.

JUDGE. What do you mean?

NAT. Why, we've got the man here in the village as'll do this job afore you and me could say Jack Robinson.

JUDGE. Indeed; and who is that?

NAT. (*impressively*). Howard Foster.

JUDGE. Pray who is Howard Foster?

NAT. You don't mean to say you ain't 'eard of 'Oward Foster? Why, the detective from Pinkerton's.

JUDGE. Indeed; and how comes he to be here?

NAT. (*after cautiously looking out of the door*). It's this way, your washup. Foster he be a single man, and bein' a single man, he've naturally took it into 'is 'ead to get married, and 'e 'ave took a fancy to your good lady in the 'ouse 'ere.

JUDGE. Miss Burgess?

NAT. Yes, your washup—'er; he see her in Boston at the 'orse show, and she struck 'im all of a 'eap.

JUDGE. Has he spoken to Miss Burgess?

NAT. Well, your washup, it's this way. Foster's a clever man an' all that, but he can't find his tongue afore a lady, so he asked me to speak to Miss Burgess fust, and make it a bit heasy for him, if your washup sees no objection.

JUDGE. Well, it is hardly a matter for me to interfere in. If Mr. Foster is a desirable man ——

NAT. Desirable! He's the top o' the heap. Shylock 'Olmes is a babby to 'im. Last month there was some bank bills—as it might be this 'ere—passed i' Boston, and one mornin' —Toosday morning it was—Foster 'ears tell on it. Well,

Toosday afternoon he sees a party on a car; innercent-looking party in a white 'at. That's 'im! says Foster. He gets on the car, follers the party to Back Bay station. Watches 'im into the station, 'ears 'im ask for a ticket to Worcester, takes one hisself, follers 'im to Worcester, watches 'im 'ome, and takes 'im just when he was settin' down to tea with 'is family. Think o' that.

JUDGE. And was the man convicted?

NAT. Well, it didn't go so far as that, because it didn't 'appen to be the right man. But, o' course, that warn't Foster's fault. 'E didn't make the man.

JUDGE. But he appears to have made the mistake. However, do what you like in the matter; I will not interfere. Have you anything else to report?

NAT. Nothink else, your washup! What be I to do with this bill?

JUDGE (*writing*). Well, you may keep it for the present, but don't lose it.

NAT. (*aside; pocketing the good bill with obvious delight*). Catch me losin' a twenty dollar bill. (*Aloud.*) Thank you, sir. Good-morning, your washup.

JUDGE (*as he writes*). Find out what you can about that bill. (*Looks up.*) Oh! he's gone, is he? Well —— (*Knock. Enter* MONSIEUR GASPARD.) Ah! You are the musician from Boston, I suppose?

GASP. Zank you, it is vere I am goom from.

JUDGE. And you can make all the arrangements for music at my picnic?

GASP. Zank you, it is vat I am goom for.

JUDGE. Your name is ——

GASP. Gaspard, if you please, sare.

JUDGE. Well, M. Gaspard, what we want is a little light music. I am not a musician myself, but what we want is a kind of a—a—little—a—a—not too—a—a —— You know what I mean.

GASP. I understand you precisely. I shall give you plenty beautiful music. I hef gomposed it myself.

JUDGE. Rather a waste of time that, isn't it, when you can buy it so cheap?

GASP. Sare! ze music vat I gompose zey cannot sell at any price.

JUDGE. But if it's so bad as that we mustn't have it here, you know.

GASP. Do you say bad—it is so good—it is the bad music vat is sold.

JUDGE. They give the good music away, do they? Well, what you will, but let us have something decent. By the way, do you do anything in conjuring or fireworks?

GASP. Sare, I am not a conjoorer; I am an artiste.

JUDGE. Well, well, I only asked. How many other artists shall you bring with you?

GASP. Ze other two are not artistes, zey are Englishmans.

JUDGE. Oh! three is rather a small band, is it not?

GASP. Zree is better as a big band. Ven zere is not so many instruments, zere is not so many mistakes. Zree of us shall make plenty music. Ve shall play a Fantasia descriptive which I hev gomposed. It is called "Ze Summer Shower." Ve shall play ze sun shining and ze birds singing, and you will hear zat it is a fine day. Zen we shall play the little childrens coming out of school and making haste because zey are afraid it will be going to rain. Zen we shall play ze rain to come pit-pat on ze leaves, and it is so make-believe zat ze ladies and gentlemens will put up ze umbrellas—and zen we make ze rain come fast till everyzing is wet, and by and by it will stop, and ze birds will sing again, and ze sun will shine so zat ze ladies will put up ze umbrellas again for fear to be sunburn: it is beautiful; it is magnifique. I hef gomposed it myself.

JUDGE. Could you put a little bit on the end to say there will be tea in the Conservatory from five to six and fireworks in the garden at dusk, for anybody who cares to stay?

GASP. Sare, I shall zink about it. I should be obliged to charge a leetle more money.

JUDGE. Oh, yes, by the way, what is your charge, M. Gaspard?

GASP. It will be twenty dollars altogezer.

JUDGE. Then if you don't mind, as I shall be busy on the day, I will pay you now. (*Aside.*) Where is that bill I took out? (*To* GASP.) Here is a twenty dollar bill. I may leave all the rest to you.

GASP. I shall give you satisfaction, sare. I wish you good-bye. [*Exit, leaving his cane.*

JUDGE. And now for some lunch. (*Rings. Enter* MISS B.) Ah, Miss Burgess, will you kindly tell Stubbings to bring round the buggy after lunch? I want to put in a day in the court house, so you will be left alone in the house till Thursday, but you won't mind that?

MISS B. (*sighing*). I do feel very lonely sometimes, Judge. I cannot help envying those ladies who have husbands to care for them.

JUDGE. Well, Miss Burgess, I am not at liberty to speak openly, but perhaps you will have an offer before many days. Wait and see.

MISS B. (*agitated*). Oh, Judge! What do you mean? Can it be ——

JUDGE. Patience—patience. All in good time. [*Exit.*

MISS B. What can he mean? Has he made up his mind? It can be nothing else. (*Looks after the* JUDGE.) Judge! Judge! I can make you happy as no one else can. (*Turns from the door.*) You must know that I adore you —— (GASP. *enters unseen and takes his cane.*) I will marry none but you.

GASP. Pardon, Mademoiselle, vas you speaking to me?

MISS B. Sir! Oh, oh! (*Faints*—GASP. *supports her.*)

Enter NAT.

NAT. Oh, my belt and buttons! Oh, my wig and whiskers! I come to look for a bad twenty dollar bill and what do I see? Oh, that's one on Foster!

(*Searches papers on the table.* NAT. *retires on tiptoe.*)

CURTAIN

ACT II

SCENE.—*The garden-house.* NAT. *is discovered. A cucumber (made of rolled paper bandaged in green cloth) lies upon a table. In the rear a partition or curtain, some three feet high, projecting into room. Plants are standing here and there.*

NAT. Well, so this is to be the bower o' bliss. Two chairs, one cowcumber. (*Takes it up and talks to it.*) You won't tell no tales, will you? You think yourself lucky you ain't a constable. You've only got to lie here nice an' cool till the salmon's ready for you, and I've got to lead up to a hoffer of marriage to a lady on behalf of a party what's too nervous to do it hisself. (*Lays down cucumber.*) You lay there and 'ear me do it.

Enter HOWARD FOSTER.

FOST. I feel so nervous, Nathan. You can't think how nervous I feel. Where my profession is concerned I am a lion.

NAT. That I well knows, Foster.

FOST. But where my affections are concerned I am a lamb. I am positively afraid of saying a word to her!

NAT. Well, a lamb's reckoned very takin' with the ladies —much takin'er than what a lion is.

FOST. No! do you think so?

NAT. In course I do. Cheer up, Foster! Mary 'ad a little lamb, you know. She never 'ad no little lion. The more you "lambs" the more you'll be took to.

FOST. You know her, don't you, Nathan?

NAT. Well I knows her, Foster.

FOST. And you'll say a few words to break it to her? just to prepare her for my coming.

NAT. Gladly I will, Foster, and proud to do it.

FOST. When's she coming, Nathan?

NAT. Eleven o'clock. "Will you come at eleven o'clock, Miss," I says to 'er, "and speak to a gentleman?" "What gentleman?" she says. "A detective," I says, "what the Judge wishes to find about a twenty dollar bill what ain't

a good un." "Anythink the Judge wishes," she says, "I'm willing to act up to, and I'll be there accordin'."

FOST. Nathan, you're a genius; you ought to be one of us. That's a clever steer about the twenty dollar bill.

NAT. Bless you, that ain't made up; it's solemn truth. You've got to 'elp me about that afterward.

FOST. Oh! true, is it? Ha! ha! ho! ho! I smell a rat.

NAT. What, where's a rat? (*Mounts a chair.*)

FOST. I'll help you! Got a bad bill, have you? Why, I'm on the track of a bill myself, and if your man turns out to be my man, we shall kill two bills with one stone—I mean two birds with one bill—I mean that as soon as we find out where the Judge's bill came from there'll be twenty dollars for yourself. You're an intelligent officer, and you and I are after the same man; and we'll have him. You're an honor to the force.

NAT. I've often thought that myself. But I ain't respected not as I should be. Now, look 'ere, Foster, what should you do if you had a himp as called out Bobby, Bobby, whenever he catched sight of you? Just 'cos you was a Henglishman!

FOST. Ah, how old? (*Takes out his note-book.*)

NAT. About five.

FOST. Ah! it's a troublesome age that. Boy, I suppose?

NAT. Yes, boy; I can do better with gals.

FOST. Boys are very difficult to manage. What age did you say?

NAT. About five.

FOST. About five. What does he call you?

NAT. Bobby! Bobby! just like that.

FOST. Scandalous; it's this education that ruins 'em. I'll tell you! Give him a nickel a week not to call after you.

NAT. It'll come expensive.

FOST. Never mind the expense. The law must be respected at any cost.

NAT. You're right, Foster, as usual. You've took a load off my mind.

FOST. Don't mention it. I'll think out a little thing like that for you any time. (*Clock strikes eleven.*) Eleven—and there she comes. You'll prepare her, Nathan, won't you? (*Shakes his hand.*) Let me hide somewhere, and I'll come out when I've got a bit used to the feeling.

(*Hides behind the partition.*)

Enter MISS B.

NAT. I take it very kindly in you, miss, to come and talk over this little matter.

MISS B. Anything that will further justice, and give satisfaction to the Judge, I am glad to do. But where is your friend, the detective?

NAT. Howard Foster? Oh! he'll soon be 'ere, miss. He's a wonderful man is Foster—hequal to hanythink.

(FOST., *visible throughout over the screen, encourages* NAT.)

MISS B. Indeed! I am quite anxious to see him.

NAT. Ah, you'll take to 'im when you do see 'im, miss.

MISS B. I have no doubt of it, Nathan. The Judge is fortunate in having the aid of such an officer.

NAT. The Judge be uncommon put out over this 'ere note.

MISS B. Naturally.

NAT. A single man's a lot easier put out than what a married man is. It's a pity the Judge don't get married, miss!

MISS B. Oh, Nathan, do you think so?

NAT. I do, miss, and if a 'umble man might make so bold, it's a pity you don't get married yourself. That there gentleman we've been speakin' of, miss, would be proud to 'ave you, only he don't like to say the word.

MISS B. Oh, Nathan, how can you know what he thinks?

NAT. I've heard 'im say so.

MISS B. Has the Judge spoken of me?

NAT. (*with puzzled air*). The Judge? (*Recollects.*) Oh! yes, miss! The very last time we was together, afore he went to Boston, we was talkin' about you in respect o' matrimony.

MISS B. (*aside*). The day he spoke so mysteriously. (*Aloud.*) But pray, Nathan, what concern could it be of yours?

NAT. Well, miss, I was to say a few words first to make ready like, and break it to you, miss.

MISS B. (*aside*). Who would have supposed the Judge could be so shy? (*To* NAT.) I trust you are not deceiving me.

NAT. Deceive you! oh, miss! When a gentleman I respect and 'onor has set his 'eart on a lady, could I deceive her?

MISS B. I trust you, Nathan—but it is so strange—and it is time the Judge had returned. Oh! how apprehensive I feel. (*Aside.*) To think he should make me an offer through Nathan!

NAT. There is no cause to be afeard, miss. You have this little talk with Foster, and I'll keep a lookout for the Judge. He won't mind.

FOST. (*emerging*). At your service, madame.

[*Exit* NAT., *behind partition.*

MISS B. (*startled*). Oh! where have you come from?

FOST. In my profession, dear lady, we come and go mysteriously. Yet now I am here I am all trepidation at the thought of addressing you.

MISS B. You have no cause whatever for apprehension. (*Delight of* FOST.) I know something of your errand already. You have come here to seek ——

FOST. I have come to seek some one upon whom I have long had my eye; and now that my errand prospers, I am more than happy. Little did I expect to make my capture as easily as you encourage me to hope will be the case.

MISS B. I rejoice in your rapid success no less than you do yourself, and it will also be gratifying to the Judge. I am very glad, indeed. Nathan implied that you were quite irresistible.

FOST. Oh, Miss Burgess! if my manner seems to you somewhat abrupt, pray attribute it to my nerves. You know my errand here, and why I wished to speak to you?

MISS B. I think I understood it from Nathan that you wished to have my coöperation, but I fear you will find me a poor partner for so skilled a person as yourself.

FOST. Oh! don't say that—only assure me you are willing to try it.

MISS B. Pray do not doubt that; I am most willing. (FOST. *begins to act absurdly, smiling sentimentally and striking attitudes.* MISS B. *takes alarm.*) But really I fear I must leave you now. We can talk of this another time.

(*Moves toward door.*)

FOST. (*sentimentally*). Must you go?

MISS B. Indeed I must! Good-bye. (*Going.*)

FOST. Before you go, just one ——

MISS B. Not another word now, I beg. I must indeed leave you. [*Exit.*

FOST. (*excitedly*). She consents; she's mine. Nathan, come out here. (*Drags him out.*) Shake hands. How can I ever repay you, old friend? You prepared the way magnificently. There was hardly a word left for me to say.

NAT. It was your heye as done it, Foster.

FOST. No, do you think so? Anyhow it is done. Isn't she charming?

NAT. Oh, she's a nice young—I mean old—I should say middle-aged lady, and she 'as a lovin' 'art.

FOST. Has she now? I thought she seemed a trifle—well, cautious.

NAT. Oh, she 'as a lovin' 'art. Why, it was only day afore yesterday I 'ear 'er adorin' a furrin gentleman and restin' in 'is arms quite lovin'.

FOST. You lie. (*Chase and capture of* NAT.) Now, recreant, speak. It is false!

NAT. Don't take on like that, Foster. It's nothin' to take on about. All ladies is that way.

FOST. (*shaking him*). A foreigner didst thou say? Didst thou smite him down, didst brain him, didst flay him, didst tear him asunder? Speak!

NAT. Did I? No, in course not. This, I says, is Howard Foster's job. I ain't goin' to touch it, and no more I did.

FOST. (*bursting into tears*). Forgive me, Nathan; I am unstrung. There; 'tis over. I will be a man again. A foreigner, did you say?

NAT. Yes; short gentleman, long 'air, looked like a fiddler.

FOST. Let me but find him, and he shall never fiddle more.

NAT. (*looking out*). Hallo! Sh!

FOST. What now?

NAT. Strangers.

FOST. The plot thickens. Quick, let us hide. Here!

(*Hide behind the partition, over which their heads now and then appear.*)

Enter A. SHARP *and* B. FLAT.

SHARP. Is this the place he told us to meet him at?

FLAT. Yes, bottom of the garden, second turning after the pump; it's all right.

(NAT. *and* FOST. *make signals to each other and take notes.*)

SHARP. Well, what does he want to bring us here for? We ain't paid to run about a garden after him, even if we are Union men.

FLAT. He wants to say something about some notes that went wrong. There seems to be something amiss with 'em, to his thinking.

(*Excitement of* NAT. *and* FOST. *throughout.*)

SHARP. The notes are right enough, and what if they're not? These country bumpkins can't tell the difference; nothing's good enough for these Frenchmen, it seems.

FLAT. No, no, Sharp; speak fair; the man has his living to get if he is a foreigner. He's taken a heap of trouble over this affair, and naturally he wants it to go off well.

SHARP. You're always too easy going, Flat; what does he want to make all this fuss for if two or three notes did go wrong?

FLAT. Never mind, man. We'll be away from this to-night, and then it'll be all over.

SHARP. Well, hang me if I can stand a foreigner for a leader. You never know where you have 'em.

FLAT. Here he comes anyhow; let's hear what he has to say.

Enter GASP., *fussily.*

GASP. Ah! zentlemen, here ve are. I vish to talk over zings quietly, so zat everyzing shall go off well, and we shall not be disgraced.

SHARP. Well, Munseer, what is it?

GASP. You was doing very bad. Some of ze notes vat you hef made yesterday is bad, vile, and I cannot pass them.

FLAT. We've done the best we could, Munseer. They're very awkward notes to get right.

GASP. Ah! ze Englishman is not good artist. He is clumsy, gauche, stupid.

SHARP. Now, look here, Munseer; we're putting you in the way of making a bit of money to-day, and you ought to be grateful. There is one thing a Union man can do, and that is, strike. Say another word, and we strike, me and Flat. Where will you be then?

FLAT. What Sharp says, I fall in with. We're helping you to make money, and you must be civil.

GASP. Zentlemans, I beg your pardon. I forgot to say that if you play your parts well, I shall gif you double vat I haf promised.

SHARP. Now, why didn't you say that before? That's business, that is.

FLAT. Leave it to us, Munseer. We'll see you through all right.

GASP. Ah! zat is good. I zank you very much. Just allow me to say one leetle vord. Mr. Flat, you will begin viz the bass notes, one, two, zree, four. You will be very careful. Mr. Sharp, you follow viz ze tenor, vich is more difficult, but if you mind vat you are doing, I shall not be afraid. Now, zentlemen, ve shall haf some refreshments togezer.

SHARP. Much obliged, I'm sure.

FLAT. Thank you, Munseer. You do understand what's what, anyhow. [*Exeunt.*

(NAT. *and* FOST. *come forward.*)

NAT. Oh, the villins. Oh, the schemin' rascals. That I should live to 'ear the likes o' that.

FOST. Nathan, this is a pretty little thing we've come in for. Now we know where the notes come from.

(NAT. *and* FOST. *take out note-books.*)

NAT. You 'eard him say he had some notes what 'e couldn't pass? You know that we Henglishmen halways says notes when we means bills.

FOST. Yes, I've got that down. You heard him offer to pay these men double if it all went right?

NAT. Yes, and one of 'em has four base notes.

FOST. Yes! those must be "twenties," and the other man has the "tenner."

NAT. What shall we do?

FOST. Do? Why, arrest them.

NAT. My Mrs. don't like me arrestin' strangers. It ain't safe.

FOST. Oh, it's quite safe. One naturalized American is worth three Britishers. Why (*feeling* NAT.'s *arm*), here's a biceps we don't get in Boston. You go quietly behind him and take him by the arms, and there you are.

NAT. Me! Oh, no, Foster, no! That's your modesty. You must arrest him, and I'll 'elp you if 'e is violent.

FOST. No! Nathan, you shall arrest him, and I'll witness the arrest. You'll want a witness.

NAT. No! Foster, you was on the job first. You come down 'ere to catch 'em. I never 'eard o' these notes till long after.

FOST. I couldn't think of it, Nathan. It wouldn't be friendly. You'll get your salary raised after this.

NAT. What's the good o' bein' raised when your wife's a widder?

FOST. Why, she'll have the pension.

NAT. Oh, Foster, you don't know 'er. She'd waste it all with me not there. She's a wonderful extravagant woman. Besides, you want to stop his fiddlin'.

FOST. What! is that the foreigner?

NAT. He's the very man.

FOST. Then he is mine. Though he were twenty foreigners he should not escape me. You'll keep close to me, won't you, Nathan, and—and have a share in the credit?

NAT. Yes, Foster, we'll keep close together.

FOST. Then his doom is sealed. He shall learn that Howard Foster cannot be thwarted with impunity. Ere this eventful day has reached its close, I will have his—a—(*looking nervously round*) his name and address. (*Enter* GASP.) 'Tis he!

NAT. It's him! (*Aside.*) You've got to tackle 'im, you know.

FOST. (*aside*). One moment, and I am ready. You'll not see me overpowered, Nathan, will you? (*To* GASP.) To shake hands with you, sir, is an honor we little counted on. We're glad to see you.

(*They shake one hand each—slowly cease—and retain his wrists.*)

GASP. If you hef finished, I shall be glad to be released.

FOST. Many a better man has said the same.

NAT. This is Howard Foster, this is.

GASP. Release me at once, or I shall hef you at ze law.

NAT. We har the lor—'im and me.

FOST. Don't you know the uniform? This is Nathan Dean, chief constable of this town.

GASP. It is no matter. I demand to know why I am detained.

FOST. All in good time. Feel his pockets, Nathan, and see whether he has any of these bills on him.

(FOST. *takes both* GASP.'S *wrists.*)

NAT. (*taking out pocketbook*). 'Ere's the harticle. Proof positive—caught red-handed. The case is complete.

(*Puts empty pocketbook into* GASP.'S *pocket.*)

GASP. Excuse me, the case is not complete; you hef removed my note.

FOST. You admit that it is yours.

GASP. It is mine altogezer. I hef made it viz my own exertions, viz my skill, viz my art.

FOST. Take down his confession, Nathan.

NAT. All right; 'ow do you spell exertions?

GASP. I insist zat you let me go. I hef important engagements. Two zentlemens are awaiting me.

FOST. We know all about that, but two gentlemen have got you.

GASP. Zen I break loose.

(*They struggle.* NAT. *dances round at a safe distance.* GASP. *breaks loose.* NAT. *fells him with the cucumber.*)

FOST. (*mopping his face*). Safe at last. Nathan, you're a credit to the force.

NAT. I've often thought that myself. (*They shake hands.*)

CURTAIN

ACT III

SCENE.—*The* JUDGE'S *study.*

(*A group is discovered, consisting of* NAT., FOST., *and* GASP., *in custody with bandaged head.*)

FOST. Set him up in the corner where he can be seen.

GASP. I demand to see ze justice.

NAT. Hold your tongue, and don't speak when you ain't spoke to.

GASP. You shall be paid for zis.

NAT. I expects to be. You can speak the truth, I see, when you like. Speak it to the gentleman what's comin' to 'ear it.

Enter JUDGE.

JUDGE. Well, Nathan, what have we here? I hear you are waiting to see me.

NAT. Me and Howard Foster, your washup, has found the party which 'as been a-passin' bad notes; we arrested 'im this mornin' and brought 'im along, your washup.

JUDGE. And this is Howard Foster? We are much indebted to you, Mr. Foster, if what Nathan says is true.

FOST. Sir, any little professional service I can do to this village and this house, and yourself, sir, I do with pleasure. I have been made a happy man in this place, and if I can at any time arrest a forger or two or look up a murder, I shall be very happy to run down and do it.

JUDGE. Ah! I recollect you were to have an interview with Miss Burgess. Am I to understand that it has terminated favorably?

FOST. Thanks to Nathan here, your honor, Miss Burgess has consented to be mine. Nathan, sir, is an honor to the force.

JUDGE. Well, Mr. Foster, I congratulate you. You will have an excellent partner.

FOST. It was the very word she used, sir, and I am sure you are right. I am greatly obliged to you.

JUDGE. And now what is the business that brings us here?

NAT. Foster and me, sir, has captivated this foreign person as bein' guilty of utterin' forged bank-notes by his own confession took down by me, Nathan Dean, 'avin' found also a forged note in 'is pocket bein' the truth, the 'ole truth, and nothin' but the truth, as Foster well knows.

JUDGE. Is this the case, Foster?

FOST. It is, your honor. I came down here, not only with a view to the little private matter which has ended so happily, but also with a view to business. Being in pursuit of a forger on instructions from Pinkerton's, I found from Nathan that some one was passing counterfeit bills here, and I am satisfied that this is the man we were both in want of.

JUDGE. Surely I have seen this man before.

GASP. Sare, you hef entrusted to me ze music for ze picnic.

JUDGE. Of course I have. M. Gaspard, is it not?

GASP. Ze same, and I assure you zat it was all a mistake.

JUDGE. If you have been passing counterfeit bills, it was a serious mistake, as you will discover.

GASP. No, sare. Vat I say is zat it is all false vat zese stupid men hef told you.

JUDGE. What have you to say to this, Nathan? I shall want M. Gaspard for the picnic this afternoon. I am no musician myself, but I fancy he will not play the violin so comfortably with handcuffs on. What is the evidence?

NAT. (*taking out note-book*). Yesterday, your washup, me and Foster was in the garden-'ouse at ten minutes arter eleven, when we 'ears footmarks.

JUDGE. You heard what?

NAT. Footprints, your washup, and two indivijuals came in, and begun to commence to 'ave a conversation, me and Foster bein' congealed, and out of 'earing.

FOST. Out of sight, Nathan.

NAT. Yes, behind a petition.

JUDGE. Behind a what?

NAT. Be'ind the petition in the garden-'ouse, your washup. Just after the lady had called in and made Foster a 'appy man.

JUDGE. That occurred in the garden-house, did it? Well, what did you hear from behind the partition?

NAT. Well, your washup, it was like this 'ere: me and Foster was just talkin' over this little success with your good lady in the 'ouse, when we 'ears footprints, and two indivijuals

comes in and begins to commence to 'ave a conversation, and we 'ides be'ind the petition.

JUDGE. But what did you hear?

NAT. We 'eard the conversation, your washup.

JUDGE. What was it about?

NAT. About ten minutes past eleven, your washup.

JUDGE. Yes, yes; don't you see I want the evidence? You've brought this musician here and accused him of passing bad bills. I want the evidence.

NAT. Certainly, your washup. It was like this 'ere. Me and Foster was just a-talkin' over this little love affair when we 'ears footprints, and two indivijuals came in and begins to commence to 'ave a conversation, and so me and Foster 'ides be'ind the petition.

JUDGE. And what did they say?

NAT. It's just what I'm a-goin' to tell your washup. It was like this 'ere; me and Foster ——

JUDGE. No, no, no. Stand down. Mr. Foster, will you oblige me with the evidence?

FOST. Certainly, sir. The two men to whom Nathan refers ——

JUDGE. Are they in custody?

NAT. I've got my heye on 'em, your washup.

JUDGE. Very good; now proceed.

FOST. The conversation related, your honor, entirely to forged notes. This man came in, evidently by appointment, spoke angrily, complained that he couldn't pass certain notes, and at last promised double shares to the others if they would get them off his hands.

GASP. Sare! I hef said nozing of ze kind. It is an invention.

NAT. Well, that is a whopper. You see, your washup, it was like this 'ere. Me and Foster ——

JUDGE. Yes, we have heard that already. Where are these two men? Go and fetch them. (*Exit* NAT.) M. Gaspard, what have you to say to all this?

GASP. Sare, ze conversation vat I hef had vas not mentioning bank-notes. Ze story zey hef told you is false. Zay hef gomposed it zemselves. I am unguilty of nozing at all.

Enter NAT. *with* FLAT *and* SHARP.

JUDGE. Are these the two men?

NAT. They are, your washup.

JUDGE. You recognize them, Mr. Foster?

FOST. I do, sir.

JUDGE. What is your name?

FLAT. Flat, sir.

JUDGE. And yours?

SHARP. Sharp, sir.

JUDGE. What brings you to this place?

FLAT. We are a orchestra, sir.

JUDGE. You had a conversation with this gentleman in my garden-house?

SHARP. We had, sir.

JUDGE. It was about some counterfeit bank-notes, I am told.

FLAT. No, sir, we never heard anything about any bank-notes; did we, Sharp?

SHARP. Never heard a word about 'em.

NAT. Oh, what a whopper. You see, Judge, it was like this 'ere. Me and Foster was a-talkin' over this little love affair when we 'ears footprints ——

JUDGE. Yes, yes, you mentioned that before. This is a most puzzling business. You are sure these are the men?

FOST. Certain, your honor.

Enter MISS B., *who starts slightly on seeing* GASP.

MISS B. I beg your pardon, Judge; I did not know you were engaged.

JUDGE. Pray remain, Miss Burgess; you may possibly help us. I believe (excuse me for referring to a delicate matter so publicly) that you paid a visit to the garden-house yesterday.

MISS B. Oh, Judge!

JUDGE. I sincerely hope that you are satisfied with the result of it, Miss Burgess.

MISS B. Oh, I am sure I am. How can you entertain a moment's doubt, Judge? I am a very fortunate woman.

JUDGE. And Nathan did his errand well? He proved an acceptable mediator?

MISS B. None could have done it better; he approached the matter with the utmost delicacy.

JUDGE. And now, Miss Burgess, may I ask whether you saw anybody else in or near the garden-house besides Nathan and Mr. Foster?

MISS B. Nobody at all, Judge.

FOST. May I put a question to you without intruding? After that happy interview yesterday, when you consented to become my wife ——

MISS B. Oh, you horrid man. Your wife indeed. Judge, let me be protected from this insolence.

FOST. Insolence! Can my ears be deceiving me? I offered you my hand, madam, and you accepted it. You said you would be my partner.

MISS B. It is not the case, sir, and you must know it.

NAT. Oh! what whoppers people is tellin'. You see, Judge, it was like this 'ere: me and Foster ——

JUDGE. Do not add to the confusion, Nathan. Be good enough to tell us, Miss Burgess, exactly what occurred in the garden-house. I am puzzled beyond measure.

MISS B. My story is a very simple one, and if you wish, Judge, I will tell it. As soon as Nathan told me that you were anxious to make me an offer of marriage ——

NAT. Oh, what whoppers! I never said nothing of the sort. A woman of your age, too. I'm ashamed of you, I am.

MISS B. Judge, it was true, was it not? Do not tell me I have been deceived.

JUDGE. Upon my word, this is bewildering. Is there anybody present who can speak the truth?

GASP. Sare, I can. Zis lady told me she would marry nobody but me.

(*Sensation;* MISS B. *faints.*)

JUDGE. Then pray take her and be off. Take her quietly before she comes round and denies it.

FOST. One moment, please, your honor. This man is under arrest.

JUDGE. I have had enough of that matter. There is not a particle of evidence.

FOST. Excuse me, your honor, a counterfeit note was found in his pocketbook, and is now in Nathan's possession.

JUDGE. Is this so, Nathan?

NAT. 'Ere is the very harticle, your washup.

(*Produces a bill.*)

JUDGE (*examining note*). It is undoubtedly a counterfeit bill. (*To* GASP.) How did you come by this?

GASP. Sare, you hef gave it me yourself in payment of ze music.

JUDGE. I gave it you? Nathan, didn't I give you that counterfeit note?

NAT. I am sure your washup wouldn't think of such a thing. Your washup was kind enough to give me a proper twenty dollar bill.

JUDGE. Nathan, you are a fool. M. Gaspard, I beg your pardon. By mistake Nathan took away a good bill, and I paid you the bad one he left. Is this business over at last?

FOST. No, Judge, it is not. My instructions from Pinkerton's are to find the man who is passing these bills, and Pinkerton's respects no person. The bill, sir, has been traced to you ——

JUDGE. Do you suppose ——?

FOST. Pinkerton's never supposes, but Pinkerton's means to sift this matter to the bottom. I shall be obliged to you for an account of the manner in which this note came into your possession.

JUDGE. We all wish to sift this matter to the bottom, and though I dislike your manner, sir, you shall know the facts. I received the note from a respectable widow, Mrs. Wordy, in payment of rent. Nathan, fetch Mrs. Wordy.

GASP. Sare, may I be allowed to speak? You hef called ze policeman a fool; he is a fool. Zis gentleman (*to* FOST.) is also a fool. I hef discovered it. Ve hef spoken, zese gentlemen and myself, of ze notes ve shall play zis afternoon. Ze policemans hef mistaken music notes for bank-notes. Zey are stoopid men. (*Laughter of* FLAT *and* SHARP.)

JUDGE. What does Pinkerton's say to this?

FOST. If Pinkerton's has made a mistake in the beginning, Pinkerton's is going to be right in the end; I mean to have the man who circulated that note.

JUDGE (*to* GASP.). You and your band may go, unless it pleases you to stay and see what happens.

(NAT. *and* MRS. WORDY *heard without.*)

MRS. W. How dare you hurry me like this? Couldn't you have given a body time to dress herself decently? I'll tell your wife, and then you know what you'll get. What does the Judge want me for? Why can't you answer, you great —— (*Enter* NAT. *and* MRS. W.) Good-day, Judge; good-day, gentlemen, all. What a fine day for the picnic! What a fortunate thing it is that the rain has kept off. I can't

bear the rain at any time, but it would have been unlucky to have it wet to-day.

FOST. I see that Mrs. Wordy is my landlady at the Penrose Inn, your worship. With your leave, I will question her myself. Mrs. Wordy, will you attend to me?

MRS. W. I'm sure I have attended to you, Mr. Foster, as attentive as mortal woman could. This very morning have I been hours and hours mending for you, and that a shirt which is more like a fishing net for the holes it has. If you didn't wear paper collars and cuffs ——

FOST. Silence, woman.

MRS. W. Woman, indeed; well, I never! And what are you? A man, I suppose. Oh, no, you ain't that; don't think it.

FOST. Listen to me.

MRS. W. Yes, I'm a-listening, but I don't expect to hear anything of any sense. If I do it'll be the first time.

FOST. You paid the Judge a twenty dollar bill this week?

MRS. W. Yes, that I did, and I always pays my rent on the very day, which is more than a-many does, as his honor well knows.

FOST. Where did you get that bill?

MRS. W. Where did I get it? Oh, dear me. A pretty question that. I'm not listening to you for nothing. Where did I get that bill? Am I likely to forget, seeing the trouble I had to get it? It was you paid it me, when at last you did pay, for board and lodging, and little enough, too, considering what I've had to put up with. Where did I get it, indeed?

FOST. (*after hurriedly examining his pocketbook*). Upon my word. Ha! ha! This is very funny. Really. Ha! ha! a most amusing mistake. If I haven't paid Mrs. Wordy the very note they gave me to investigate. Very amusing, upon my word.

JUDGE. Pardon me, it is not at all amusing. Pinkerton's have traced this note to the end, and come round to the beginning again. I hope it is satisfied, but we are not.

NAT. Don't be hard on 'im, your washup. You see, it's like this 'ere: Me and Foster ——

JUDGE. Thank you, we have all had enough of Foster. (*To* FOST.) If you pay Mrs. Wordy and leave the village at once, we will say no more, but if not ——

NAT. Please, your washup, he said I was to have twenty dollars if we found out where the note came from.

JUDGE. If that is so, that money must be paid also.

FOST. Your worship, I—I cannot pay. Pray give me time.

MRS. W. Give him six months, Judge.

JUDGE. If you really cannot pay your debts, the constable shall detain you.

(NAT. *arrests him.*)

GASP. (*to* FOST.). You hef had enough of notes; you hef now got a rest. You gif us all a rest. Eh?

SHARP. } Hear, hear!
FLAT. }

MISS B. (*reviving*). Oh! what am I to do?

JUDGE. I hope these unfortunate mistakes will not prevent your remaining to be the excellent housekeeper I have always found you.

NAT. You see, yer washup, it's like this 'ere: me and Foster ——

JUDGE. You and Foster, as you now are, give us all great satisfaction. The rest of us will go and prepare for the picnic. You, Mr. Howard Foster, of Pinkerton's, may go and experience the result of being "too clever by half."

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ACT II.—The Rudd library, five days later.

ACT III.—The same. Evening of the same day.

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